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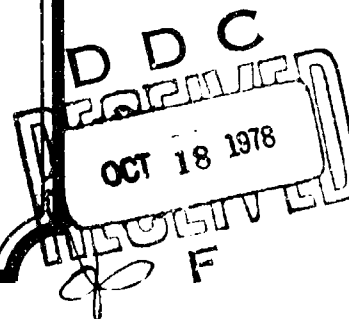
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Sea and Shore Rotation:  
The Family and Separation  
Phase II

Final Report

Alice Ivey Snyder



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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER <del>DR78</del>	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Sea and Shore Rotation: The Family and Separation. Phase II. Final Report		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Final Report, FY78
6. AUTHOR(s) Alice Ivey/Snyder		7. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Anthropological Inquiry Services 1749 Navaja Lane El Cajon, California 92021		9. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) N00014-78-C-0195 N0001477WR70058 N000147TWRT0158
10. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Organizational Effectiveness Research Program (Code 452), Office of Naval Research, Arlington, Va. 22217		11. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS NR170-835
12. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office) <i>(12) Tip</i>		13. REPORT DATE 25 September 25, 1978
		14. NUMBER OF PAGES 16
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		16. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for Public Release Distribution Unlimited Reproduction in whole or in part is permitted for any purpose of the United States Government		
18. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
19. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES None of the opinions and assertions contained herein are to be construed as official or as reflecting the views of Office of Naval Research or the Department of the Navy.		
20. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Wives                      Family                      Military Dependents Father Absence              Submariners              Marital Separation At Sea Time		
21. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This report is a brief review of research techniques and conclusions drawn from twenty-seven months of study of submariners' wives.		

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Sea and Shore Rotation: The Family and Separation  
Phase II Final Report, 1977-1978

Introduction

This research project has dealt with the implications of sea time and shore return of the husband upon the Navy dependent family. The specific emphasis has been upon the wives of submariners who were attached to submarines homeported in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The purpose was to examine the well being of the woman, socially, emotionally, and physically, and to determine what effects the separations and reunions had upon that well being. It was assumed that such knowledge should provide insight into coping mechanisms which allow a wife to adapt successfully to the sea and shore rotation of her spouse.

Methods

Fifteen months, beginning in August of 1976, were spent in active data collection, and twelve months were spent in secondary collection, data processing and analysis. During the initial phase of research two investigators were involved, an anthropologist and a psychiatrist. During Phase II the anthropologist worked alone.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
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Methods of data collection included participant observation, clinical observation in limited application, marital cotherapy, administration of questionnaires (seven questionnaires were administered, three of which are directly comparable to those utilized by Family Studies Branch, Naval Health Research Center, San Diego, in their study of aviators and their families), interviews, the maintenance of logs and diaries, and naturalistic observation.

Naturalistic observation, the careful and detailed scrutiny of individuals in their normal day to day activities, was the most significant contribution to knowledge of the impact of separation upon the submariner's wife. Eight women, four wives of enlisted men and four wives of officers, were observed in their homes and in their out of home activities both in husband presence and in husband absence. One hundred and eighteen videotapes, over one hundred of which are color tapes, were the result of recording on camera many of the interactions of the women with their children and their husbands. Each woman was observed for up to nine days.

Methods of data processing included the reviewing of the videotapes with a stop watch, noting important sequences and their duration. Seating patterns and associated instances of territoriality were noted and compared

in husband presence and in absence. General appearance of the woman, affect, and nonverbal clues to her emotional status were also noted as well as the general topics of conversation and expressed areas of concern and interest. Each informant wife's questionnaires were thoroughly reviewed and her written responses to questions relating to sea and shore rotation evaluated. Notes taken in the field also contributed to the analysis of each woman's reaction to sea and shore rotation.

Not all questionnaires obtained from other submariners' wives have been processed. However, those dealing with physical health and life stresses have. Questions relating to role playing activities have also been subjected to analysis. And, logs and diaries have been reviewed carefully. To date, some data from more than three hundred women have been reviewed but there are many issues left to be analyzed.

#### Activities of the Investigator

In addition to the processing of information gained during Phase I of this research, the investigator has presented a paper at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association in November in Houston as part of a symposium on Maritime Anthropology. The paper was entitled: "Maritime Marriage: A Form of Episodic Monogamy."

A group of psychologists involved in an Office of Naval Research sponsored symposium/workshop on organizational effectiveness were briefed on the research and its possible implications upon the man's job performance and career retention. A lengthier discussion at the Navy Personnel Research and Development Center in San Diego provided stimulating and constructive dialogue with the sociologists and psychologists involved.

Two trips were made to Hawaii in order to set up access to mental health records of women seen at the Mental Health Clinic and for consultation with several psychologists and psychiatrists and anthropologists. The second trip resulted in all records being obtained for dependent wives seen at the Pearl Harbor Mental Health Clinic between 1963 and 1973 (in 1973 service of a psychological or psychiatric nature to the wives of Navy personnel was halted; to date it has not been reinstated). 1200 records were scanned and coded and the 200 records of submariners' wives are being more carefully processed at this time.

Three technical reports were issued during the fiscal year. Thus, the reports which have been produced as a result of this research grant include the following, this final report not included:

1. Sea and Shore Rotation: The Family and Separation: A Bibliography of Relevant Material.

- TR #1. Issued September 14, 1977.
2. Sea and Shore Rotation: The Family and Separation. Final Report 1976-1977. Issued September 14, 1977.
  3. The Wife of the Career-Oriented Submariner in Mid-Life Transition. TR #2. Issued May 17, 1978.
  4. The Effects of Husband's At-Sea Time Upon the Role Playing Behavior of the Submariner's Wife. TR #3. Issued August 30, 1978.
  5. Periodic Marital Separation and Physical Illness. TR #4. Issued September 15, 1978.

A chapter in the forthcoming book Military Families: Adaptation to Change edited by Edna Jo Hunter and D. Stephen Nice (Praeger, anticipated publication October, 1978) is based on TR #2 dealing with mid-life transitioning. TR #4 will appear in the October issue (48:4) of the American Journal of Orthopsychiatry.

A videotape which exhibits short sequences from several of the informant wives has been prepared and is on file at the Organizational Effectiveness Research Programs Division (Code 452) of Office of Naval Research. The sequences were selected in order to show how the women

react to presence and absence of their husbands in terms of territoriality and how their lives are compartmentalized by the separation/reunion cycle.

### Major Conclusions

Conclusions which were drawn at the end of the data gathering period still hold. They include: 1. The literature relating to submariners' wives has been predominantly related to dysfunction and potential pathology, ignoring both healthy, successfully coping women and the necessity of recognizing that "normalcy" and "health" are clearly relative terms, depending on consideration of the sociocultural environment. 2. Submariners' wives undergo a mid-life transition between the ages of 30 and 37 and many are beginning to abdicate their traditional roles as resources, or surrogate mothers, to other women. 3. Physical illness and the husband being gone are significantly correlated. If a submariner's wife is sick, her husband is probably at sea. For the sample tested, over 14 of the 17 illnesses per woman were in husband absence. 4. Separation from one's husband because he must go to sea in a submarine is a significant life event, following closely behind the important events of deaths of close family members, foreclosure, and incarceration. 5. The length of the F.B.M. operating cycle conflicts with the



time schedule of a woman's emotional cycling in reaction to it. She may not have opportunity to work through the separation or the reunion and stabilize out before she must prepare for the opposite side of the cycle. A chart describing the cycle follows on page 8.

Conclusions which have been drawn during the data analysis stage have focused on social well being more so than on the physical or emotional aspects of the successfully coping wife. Some of these conclusions are the following: 1. The quality of the marital tie bears heavily upon a woman's ability to manage her life style as a submariner's wife. If she is in a submissive, passive stance in her relationship with her spouse, and he is dominant and aggressive, then the relationship is not only schismogenic, in Batesonian terms, but the woman will probably be unable to manage the sea time of her husband adequately. 2. Other schismogenic marital ties can operate within the sociocultural milieu which might dissolve in a civilian situation which features constant presence of both spouses. 3. The most significant feature of a coping constellation which works to override stress in the group is independence of a somewhat androgynous nature. A woman who willingly assumes aspects of role behavior which are traditionally male, especially in husband absence, will conform to the standards other submariners' wives hold and will have the resources necessary to meet unexpected events with

Week 1	Numbness, withdrawal, state of mild shock
Week 2	Depression, disorganization, frenetic activity,
Week 3	anger, and resentment
Week 4	Suspended, waiting for sea departure
Week 5	Begin resolution and attempt stabilization
Week 6	Routine somewhat settled, more nonstructured than with spouse home, mildly depressed, anxious
Week 7	
Week 8	
Week 9	Begin to face idea of husband's return but guilty
Week 10	because not overjoyed by thought, nervous
Week 11	Sexually numb, mildly apprehensive, depressed, disorganized
Week 12	
Week 13	Tension increase, burst of activity ambivalent
Week 14	Eager, anxious, excited, apprehensive
Week 1	Nervous, self-conscious, excited, relieved
Week 2	Disorganized, pressure increase, argument
Week 3	Feelings having been vented, settle into routine although increasingly husband too present
Week 4	
Week 5	Husband back at work, woman feels less pressured to entertain him and he is more integrated. Couples enjoys one another, relaxed, comfortable
Week 6	
Week 7	
Week 8	
Week 9	Increasing detachment, some denial of separation
Week 10	impending, depression, sexual withdrawal, doubt
Week 11	Resentment, argument, create emotional distance
Week 12	Ready for leavetaking, beginning shift to absence
Week 1	Numbness, withdrawal, state of mild shock
Week 2	Depression, disorganization, frenetic activity



Husband Home



Husband At Sea

resilience. 4. Women who conform to a traditional, conservative, "helpless female" role stereotype will almost inevitably have difficulty in maintain psychosocial integrity. Peer pressure will work against maintaining the stereotype and the woman will have neither knowledge of nor access to resources which alleviate many of the difficulties encountered during separation periods. 5. Adequately coping women do not necessarily overthrow traditional role performances as Navy wives. Indeed, it appears that those women who are active in Navy aligned activities, or women who have jobs, schools, or other time consuming outside interests, cope better than those women who seek to remain home. 6. Resources most often used in problem solving are informal in nature and usually involve good female friends whose husbands serve with one's own husband. The widely touted formal resources (e.g., "off crews" and administrative staffs) are only used as a last resort and in cases where the problem is directly related in some way to the Navy, such as in missing allotment checks, or emergencies requiring the husband's return home.

The tentative conclusions which are evident in the mental health records of submariners' wives include the following which support some of the assertions already mentioned but also provide additional insight into the issue of sea/shore rotation. 1. A comparison of the non-

submariners' wives to submariners' wives indicates that the average age upon presentation at the Mental Health Clinic for submariners' wives is approximately four to five years younger than the non-submariners' wives. 2. Concomitantly, the rate/rank of husbands was consonant with a "typical" career pattern for the submariners' wives but not so for the other women. In other words, the husbands of the non-submarining segment represented were not achieving promotions on time; a 45 year old second class sailor as husband was represented several times, for example. 3. The ratio of Caucasian women presenting to non-Caucasian was similar to that found among the Navy in general, with one exception. While Filipinas, Koreans, Japanese, and other foreign born wives all were represented, not one single Black wife has been encountered among the 1200 records. 4. Problems presented included predominantly situational reactions. These fell into several categories, including an inability to adjust to Hawaii (a reaction which occurred approximately four to six months after arrival), an inability to adjust to the sea/shore rotation, and idiosyncratic difficulties, perhaps involving marital discord. 5. Many of the women having problems adjusting to separations were identified by the doctors as being depressed and/or as being passive/dependent personalities. 6. Prior to 1970-1971, the proportion of

officers' wives was higher than following. Apparently the CHAMPUS program and other funded means of obtaining civilian help resulted in women in perhaps more secure financial condition, and with a desire to remain anonymous, seeking help outside the Navy realm.

It is clear that much data from the project still remains to be codified and processed. Further analysis is inevitable.

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